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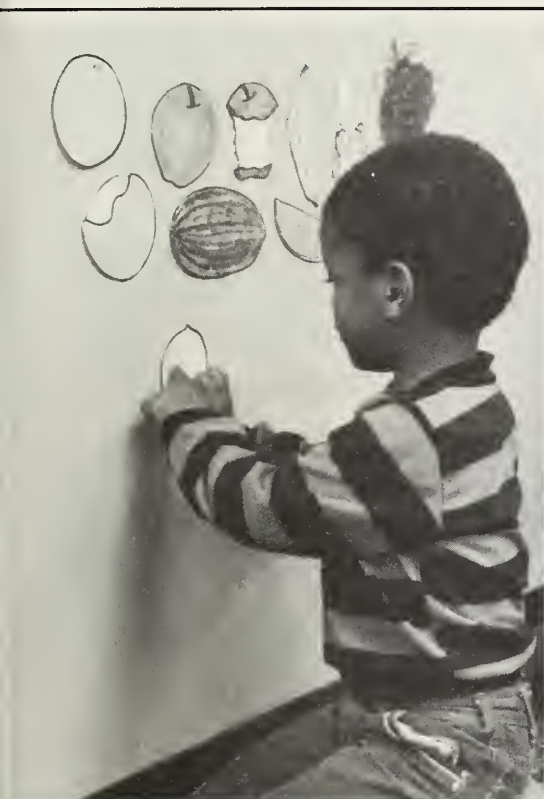


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# Food & Nutrition

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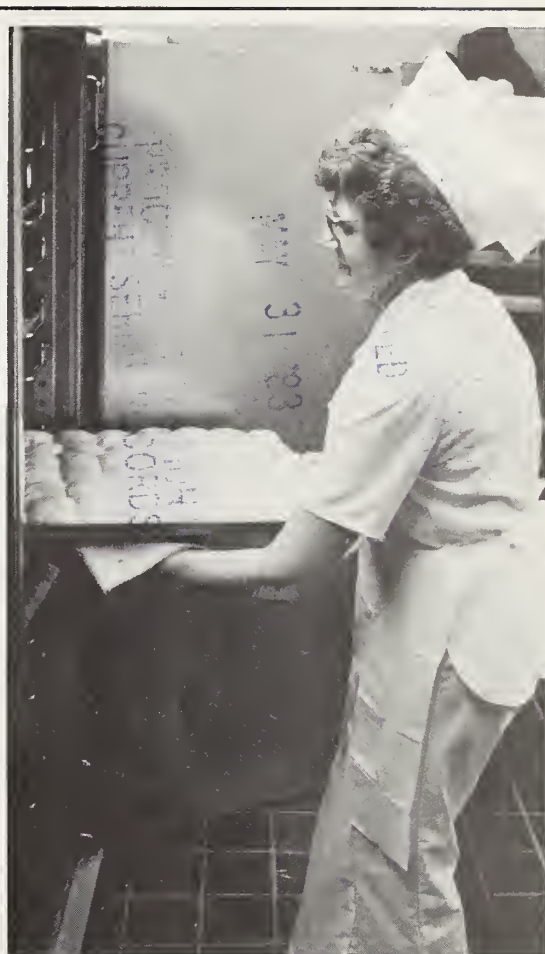
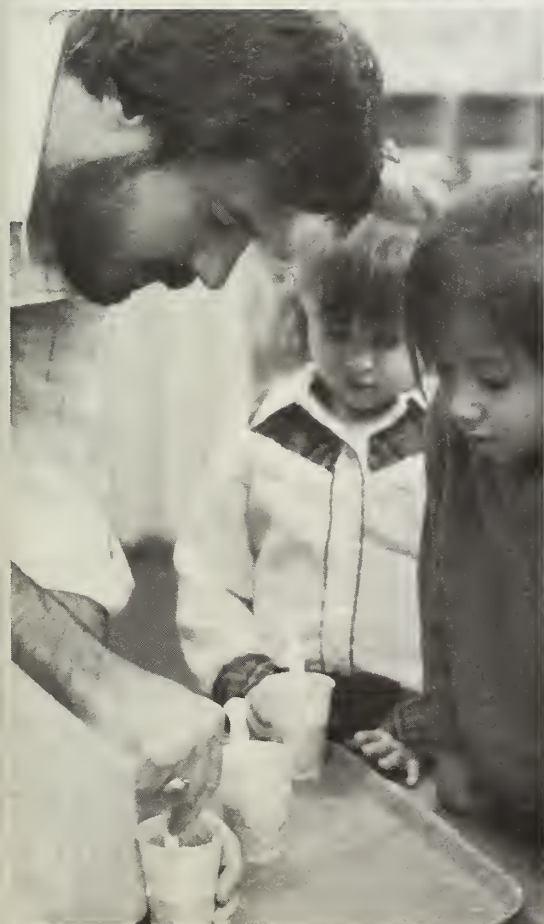
This issue is about sharing ideas, skills, and resources in the child nutrition programs. We begin with a look at some of the resources developed through the Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET). Many states are sharing their materials with USDA's Food and Nutrition Information Center in Beltsville, Maryland.

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We also see how technical assistance and teamwork are helping school districts save financially troubled food services. Experts in finance and accounting offer tips for school lunch managers who want to sharpen their managerial skills.

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Merchandising is as important in school food service as it is in the private sector. We look at two award-winning food service operations—one in a corporation, one in a school—and see what makes the customers keep coming back.





## States share materials from the Nutrition Education and Training Program

Sharing resources can be as enriching as it is economical. When you're starting something new, it makes sense to look around and see what other people have done, what resources are available. If you're involved in training school food service personnel or want to help children learn about food and nutrition, a good place to start is USDA's Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC) in Beltsville, Maryland.

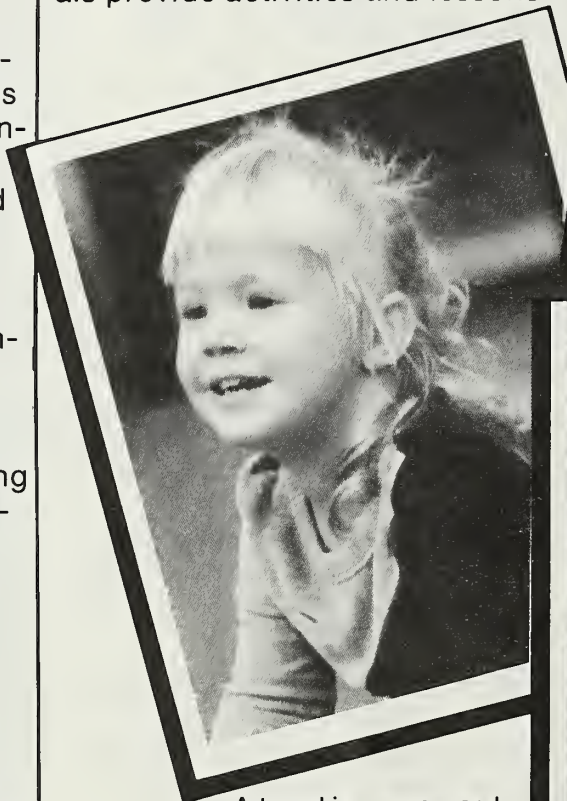
FNIC is a national repository and lending library that contains print and audiovisual materials on nutrition education, food service management, human nutrition, and consumer education. The center's materials are available free of charge to people who work with food and nutrition programs. Among those who can use the library's services are school administrators, teachers, food service managers, day care center staff and state government agencies.

This year FNIC is adding to the collection sample copies of more than 400 resource materials developed by state education agencies, universities, and school districts participating in the Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET). Through NET, USDA has provided funds to states for a wide range of activities designed to improve school food services and increase children's awareness of food and health. Many communities have used NET funds as seed money for activities they are now continuing on their own.

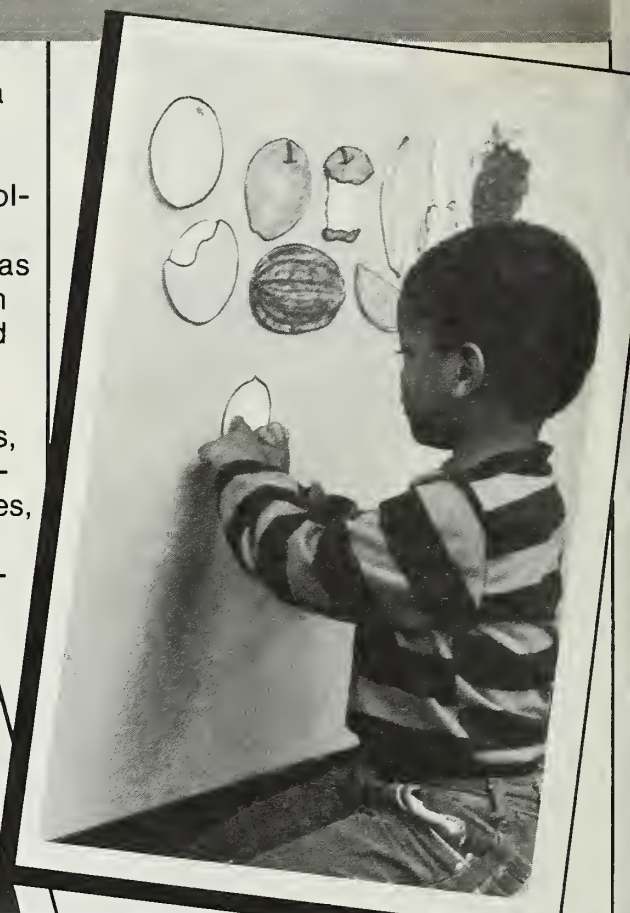
States decide how they will use NET funds, and the approaches vary. Some state education agencies have given small grants to individual school districts, while others have taken a more centralized approach and planned statewide projects. Some states have contracted with universities for special services, like developing courses for school food service people.

"Out of the projects have come a lot of good materials," says USDA nutritionist Martha Poolton, "and we're eager to see them used." Poolton, who is helping FNIC director Robyn Frank with the collection, has been encouraging states to send in samples of their NET materials and she's pleased with the response.

Among the materials the center has received are curriculum guides, student workbooks, slide presentations, plans for community activities, films, posters and public service announcements. "All of the materials provide activities and lessons



Art, cooking, songs, and games are part of NET activities for preschoolers in Artesia, California.



that can be used as they are or adapted to fit the needs of other school districts," Poolton says.

The FNIC staff is now developing an annotated listing of the materials. Some of them are already part of the library's collection and are available for borrowing. Others will be added within the next few months. In all, close to 50 states have sent in one or more of the materials they developed for NET. If you qualify for FNIC's services, you may borrow these materials.

You may also find you'd like to have some of the materials for your own collection. Many states have materials available for sale, and the

annotated listing FNIC is putting together will include information on sales.

You can also find out how to purchase materials by contacting a state's NET coordinator. FNIC staff can give you the names, addresses, and phone numbers of state NET coordinators.

On the following pages we take a look at four NET projects and see how state and local coordinators developed materials for them. We also briefly describe a variety of materials from several other states.



## A Minnesota school district develops a special curriculum for third and sixth grade students

Schools in Rochester, Minnesota, developed some unusual materials in a project that integrated nutrition into existing programs in science, health, and language arts. Donna Stanger, who directed the project, drew on top nutritionists at the nearby Mayo Clinic, a nationally known medical facility, to get the best information and advice. The result was a 3- to 4-week nutrition curriculum for third and sixth graders. The curriculum is still being used in Rochester and other districts in the state.

"We saw a need to teach nutrition, but the curriculum was full," says Stanger. "Teachers would say, 'We'll add nutrition, but what will you take away?' Integrating nutrition into existing subjects gave us more efficient teaching time."

Here's how the curriculum works: In the morning, students might do a science experiment that involves food. The experiment would be reinforced later in the day, in English class. For their grammar exercise, they would add punctuation to a sentence about the science experiment. "The unit really pulls together all that the children are learning," says Stanger.

As part of the curriculum, Stanger developed three simple computer programs. Students throughout Minnesota have access to micro-computers to use as learning tools.

The first computer program teaches kids to get the most for their calories. Students type into the computer their diet for a day. The screen then "talks" with the students, telling them about the foods they've eaten and what they could have substituted to add more variety and nutritional value. The second program combines diet and exercise to show how the two relate. The third teaches very young children about food groups.

Another part of the curriculum has third graders researching foods, using a special encyclopedia devel-

oped for the project. "We found that the existing research materials were all too advanced for third graders to do research," says Stanger, "so we developed a food encyclopedia with 59 volumes, each one on a separate food." Students use the volumes to learn about particular foods, then do oral and written reports.

A college student did the artwork for the encyclopedia. "We paid her for her work," Stanger says, "but her rates were much more reasonable than a commercial artist's would have been." Although the encyclopedia is written at a third grade level, secondary and high school students can also use it if their reading skills aren't high enough for other materials.

The computer programs developed for the Rochester project have been revised for wider use throughout the state by the Minnesota Educational Computing Consortium (MECC). MECC is funded by the state legislature and provides both computers and educational computer programs free to its members. Members include school districts, community colleges, and the University of Minnesota.

Those who do not belong to the consortium can buy MECC's computer programs for \$10.00 within Minnesota, \$29.95 outside the state. MECC also publishes a newsletter and a catalog. Materials FNIC has from the Rochester project include:

- **A Cross-Discipline Approach to Nutrition Education** (*Grade 3 and Grade 6*)
- **Teacher's Handbook**
- **Food Encyclopedia**

Computer programs are available from:

Minnesota Educational  
Computing Consortium  
2520 Broadway Drive  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55113  
Telephone: (612) 376-1134

For more information on the project, contact:

Donna Stanger  
903 West Center Street  
Lincoln School  
Rochester, Minnesota 55901  
Telephone: (507) 281-6007

## A Massachusetts community agency teaches children about food and dental health

The Community Art Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts, used their NET grant to help develop a traveling nutrition and dental program for kids. It's appropriately called Big Mouth, and the focus of the program is literally a big mouth.

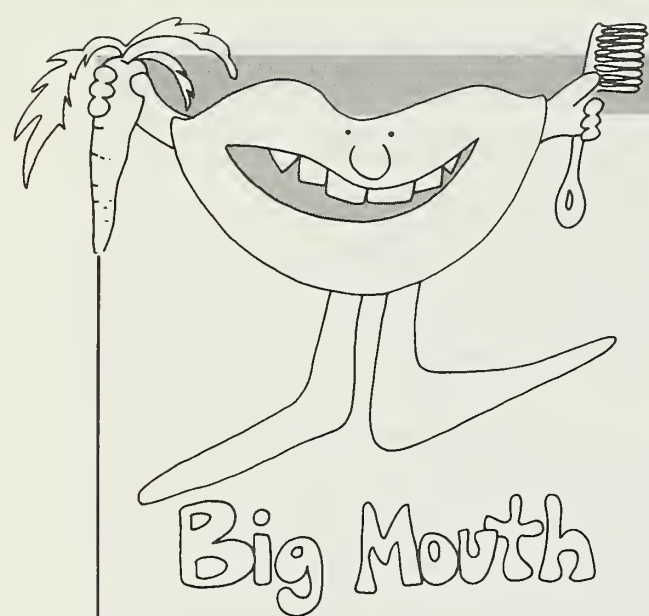
Imagine an enormous foam rubber mouth measuring 4 feet high by 12 feet by 10 feet. Imagine a toothbrush large enough to brush those teeth. Imagine flossing the teeth with a giant rope. Now imagine the reaction of children when they see Big Mouth up close.

The Community Art Center is a nonprofit community agency that offers, among other services, an afterschool day care program for



Big Mouth—an enormous foam rubber mouth big enough for kids to stand in—is helping Massachusetts children learn about nutrition and dental health.





low-income families. Michelle Samour, a program research developer at the center, designed and put together the Big Mouth program with help from other staff members and the children. In addition to NET funds, the center received money for the project from private foundations, local dentists, and dental suppliers.

As Samour explains, the idea behind the program is that children learn more when they feel involved and are having fun. Children get to climb inside Big Mouth and floss the teeth. They play games, act out plays, and use a multilingual coloring book to learn about food and dental health. The coloring book was created by children at the center and is in English, French, and Spanish.

Although Big Mouth started at the Community Art Center, it travels a lot. "It's designed to be as accessible to as many kids as possible," says Samour. During the past 2 years, Art Center children and staff have taken Big Mouth to several other afterschool centers, to a kid's fair sponsored by a popular radio station, to the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Dental Society, and to the Children's Museum in Boston during the museum's food fair.

Everywhere Big Mouth goes, children respond to the fun and playful approach to learning. "Children often have never seen a mouth so close," says Samour. "They now understand what it means to floss." At one agency, kids received tooth brushes and toothpaste during the program. When it ended, the kids raced to the bathroom to brush their teeth.

In a game called the "Good Snack

Relay Race," kids choose snacks. They play the game once, then get an explanation of what makes various snacks more nutritious than others. "When they play the game a second time, the results are exciting," says Samour. "Kids show a much better sense of what foods are better snacks."

For a while, as funds allowed, the Art Center staff worked with other agencies free of cost. Now they ask agencies to pay a small fee that covers their costs. "We've found that when an agency has a financial commitment they also have more of a commitment to keeping Big Mouth's experiences in their ongoing curriculum," she says.

When visiting other centers, Samour likes to work with the staff beforehand. She says that children retain information and respond better when teachers have the knowledge to reinforce what children learn. "We found it important to develop a small package of materials for teachers in other centers," says Samour. "We designed the materials to fit into their ongoing curriculum."

In addition to the materials for center staffs and the coloring book for children, the Art Center also developed curricula for preschoolers, teenagers, and populations with special needs. FNIC has in its collection:

- **Big Mouth (Boca Grande, La Grande Bouche) Coloring Book.**

For more information, contact:

Michelle Samour  
Community Art Center  
31 Newtowne Center  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139  
Telephone: (617) 864-3840

## Oregon schools work to interest teachers, parents and business leaders

In Oregon, individual school districts received NET funds, largely to spread the theme of "wellness" through schools and school cafeterias. Len Tritsch, NET coordinator

for Oregon, developed the theme more than 5 years ago, in hopes that staff and students would all take an active interest in nutrition and their own health.

One school district that took the "wellness" theme to heart is North Clackamas, just outside Portland. With seed money from NET, the North Clackamas School District involved teachers, secretaries, cooks, principals, parents, and central office administrators in a variety of health awareness activities. School officials felt that if the staff became involved and interested, nutrition and health would receive the necessary attention in the curriculum and classes.

"We also felt that if we were going to teach nutrition in the classroom, we needed to take a stand and be models to students outside the classroom," says Megan Walth, who put together the various activities.

More than 500 people took part in the activities during the 2 years they were held. Health professionals from the community helped out by doing a "needs assessment" of each participant before the program began. Participants then learned about nutrition, physical fitness, and stress management through 10 weeks of workshops. Each participant chose a nutrition or health-related goal and worked toward that end.

From these workshops, the North Clackamas school district developed comprehensive lesson plans that can be used with students or adults. They are compiled in two books called **Health Education Activities** and **Health Education Activities, Supplement 1981**. The lessons are adaptable for any grade level and provide enjoyable, hands-on activities for children.

In addition to the workshops for school staff and parents, the district also sponsored a separate program that brought together school administrators and local business executives for five luncheon sessions. Walth arranged the sessions through the Chamber of Commerce. For this program, North Clackamas produced a guide called **Staff Development Program in Nutrition and Health for Administrators and Business Persons**. Like the lesson plans, the guide can be adapted for use in other communities.



While North Clackamas no longer receives funds through NET, health awareness activities continue. Because the 1980-82 activities were so successful, Walth put together a district-wide employee program for this year and last, using only community resources. The workshops cost \$2.00 for each employee. This covers the cost of materials. A local hospital is donating materials and the staff to teach the workshops, at no cost. Topics include food and nutrition, health, family fitness, and safety in the workplace.

Teachers, administrators, and food service staff remain interested in the health and nutrition awareness campaign. "Naturally," says Walth, "this extends to the classroom and lunchroom."

Walth and others have developed a district-wide policy on nutritional practices. The policy outlines the kinds of foods schools can sell or serve outside the classroom. "We felt policy was set by USDA for the lunch program. We wanted to go beyond that," Walth says. "The policy is based on a formula the Oregon Public Health Association came up with. It has to do with equating calories to nutrients—the nutrient density concept. What we're aiming for is variety—to give kids a choice."

The policy affects such activities as classroom parties, food sales for fund-raisers, and food sales at games and carnivals. In practice, it means when kids sell items to raise money, they're now thinking about what they sell. If a snack isn't nutritious, they'll look for something else to sell.

To help stress the policy at the elementary level, schools have made special efforts to get parents' support. They've invited them to workshops and given them recipes high in nutrients to try at home. Now when children bring in food for school parties, parents send cheese squares, fruits, and vegetables as well as the traditional cookies and cupcakes.

"It's rewarding to see people realize we ought to have choices," says Walth.

A teen-teacher in Connecticut uses paper cut-outs to explain what foods are good sources of vitamin A. (See page 6.)

FNIC has the following materials from the North Clackamas project:

- **Health Education Activities and Health Education Activities Supplement 1981**
- **A Staff Development Program in Nutrition and Health for Administrators and Business Persons**

For additional information, contact:

Megan Walth  
North Clackamas  
School District  
4444 Southeast  
Lake Road  
Milwaukie,  
Oregon 97222  
Telephone:  
(503) 653-3067

## Connecticut plans materials and projects for use throughout the state

Unlike many other states, Connecticut took a centralized approach in using NET funds. All materials, curricula, and training programs were developed at the state level.

Before deciding how to use NET monies, state NET coordinator Lois Selna surveyed local communities to find out what their needs were and what they were already doing with nutrition education and food service training. The state education agency then contracted with the Department of Nutritional Science at the





University of Connecticut to develop a wide range of materials.

The materials have been used throughout the state in programs that involve nutrition learning activities for students and in-service training for school food service workers. The state also has made available a 3-credit graduate course to home economics and other teachers. Many teachers, Selnau reports, have taken advantage of this.

Among the materials developed for elementary schools is a kit called **Merchandising School Lunch: A Nutrition Approach**. The kit contains materials for school lunch managers, teachers, parents, and students in kindergarten through grade 4. It includes a 4-week promotional program, posters, nutrient game cards, handouts, recipes, and nutrient stickers promoting a sampling of nutritious foods. Tests have shown that nutrition awareness and lunch participation have increased in schools using the kit, while plate waste has decreased.

The state also developed two sets of six lessons each for grades 1 through 6. These are called the **Nutrient Approach to Teaching Nutrition**. The units make use of creative teaching methods to make nutrition come alive in the classroom.

One approach that met with considerable success in Connecticut was "teen teaching." In several communities, selected teenage students were trained to teach nutrition to lower grade students. The teenagers used puppets, games, handouts, and food characters to make learning about nutrition fun. While most of the student teachers were eighth through eleventh graders, in Manchester some exceptional sixth graders were trained to teach nutrition to first graders.

The state developed two sets of lessons for the teen-teaching project. The packages have six lessons each and are called **Teaching Teens to Teach Nutrition in Grades 1 through 6: A Cross-Age Approach to Nutrition Education**.

For secondary schools, Connecticut developed a series of nutrition modules, each teaching different nutrition concepts. Each module contains lessons that last 40 to 50 minutes and contain a variety of

learning experiences. They include tests for evaluating students' knowledge before and after the lessons, hand-outs for classroom use, and resource lists of printed and audio-visual aids. The modules may be used in various high school courses, such as health, home economics, social studies, family living, and physical education.

- **Snacking and Food Choices** helps teenagers grow more aware of the importance of including healthful foods in their diets.

- **Supermarket Sleuth** helps students become smart shoppers.

- **Food, Energy, and Fitness** teaches the importance of physical fitness and exercise and how these relate to diet and weight control.

- **Nutrition During Pregnancy and Lactation** makes students more aware of the relationship between diet, a healthy pregnancy, and breastfeeding.

For school food service training, the state developed a **Food Management Training Manual**. The manual includes 16 lesson plans and numerous handouts to help school food service workers improve their lunch programs.

Materials FNIC has from Connecticut include:

- **Merchandising School Lunch: A Nutrition Approach**

- **Nutrient Approach to Teaching Nutrition** (Grades 1-6)

- **Teaching Teens to Teach Nutrition in Grades 1 through 6**

- **Food Management Training Manual**

- **A Nutrition Model for Secondary Schools:** Supermarket Sleuth; Snacking and Food Choices; Food, Energy, and Fitness; Nutrition During Pregnancy and Lactation

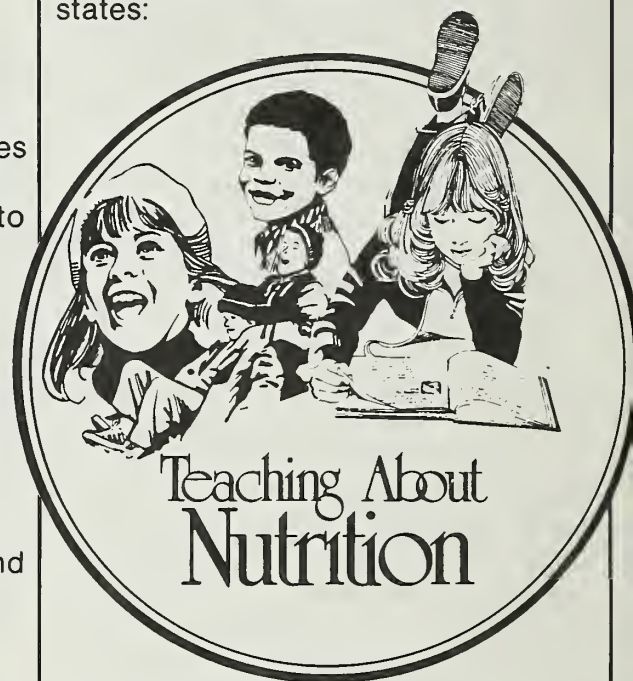
- **Vegetable Magic: A Preschool and Kindergarten Nutrition Education Source Book**

For more information, contact:

Lois B. Selnau  
Nutrition Education and Training Program  
State Department of Education  
Child Nutrition Programs  
P.O. Box 2219  
Hartford, Connecticut 06115  
Telephone: (202) 566-7311

## Highlights from other states

Most of the materials FNIC has received are for nutrition education and training programs in schools. However, the center also has materials for teaching children and staff in child care centers, day care homes, and institutions for the handicapped. Here are highlights of a variety of materials from eight states:



### Nutrition Super Stars (Arizona)

A self-contained curriculum kit for teaching upper elementary school students. The kit contains 20 class plans and uses a team approach to nutrition-fitness education. Team members are the classroom teacher, food service director, and school nurse. The team members' curriculum guide provides direction for both student activities and training plans for team members.

The nutrition activities in the kit are designed to be integrated with math, science, language arts, health, and social studies. A workbook contains 44 well-illustrated duplicating masters for student activities.

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### Specialty Menus for School Lunch (New Hampshire)

A set of several packets with specialty menus for school lunch in elementary schools. The packets include menus, recipes, decorating suggestions, task cards, letters to parents, and resource lists.



**Nutrition Education and Food Service Management: A Guide for Day Care Personnel** (*New Jersey*)

A handbook for day care center staff—teachers, teacher assistants, food service personnel—and parents of children. The book is divided into four sections with information on: basic nutrition, nutrition education activities for children, food service management, and ways to involve parents. It provides seasonal menus and recipes for many foods specified in the menus. The 214-page book comes in two volumes. Volume 1 is in English. Volume 2 is in Spanish.

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**Teaching About Nutrition** (*Colorado*)

A resource kit for use by school food service personnel, teachers, and students. The kit provides materials that can be used in classrooms as well as with PTA, clubs, and other adult groups.

There are 12 packets in all, each with a different theme. Titles include: "Getting Started," "Bulletin Board Ideas and Exhibits," "Activities for Grades 4-12," "Meet the Nutrients," "Discovering Foods," "Food Tasting Experiences," and "Nutrition in School Meals." The kit is attractively presented in a specially designed cardboard file box. The box includes transparencies and masters for reproduction.

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**Florida Nutrition Education: A Basic Skills Approach** (*Florida*)

A curriculum series with learning activities for kindergarten through grade 9 students. The learning activities are designed to reinforce basic skills in math, the language arts, science, and social studies, while teaching students about food and nutrition. There are eight booklets in all, separated into different sections for elementary, middle school, and junior high school levels. The booklets are unbound, with hole-punched pages that fit into a standard loose-leaf binder.

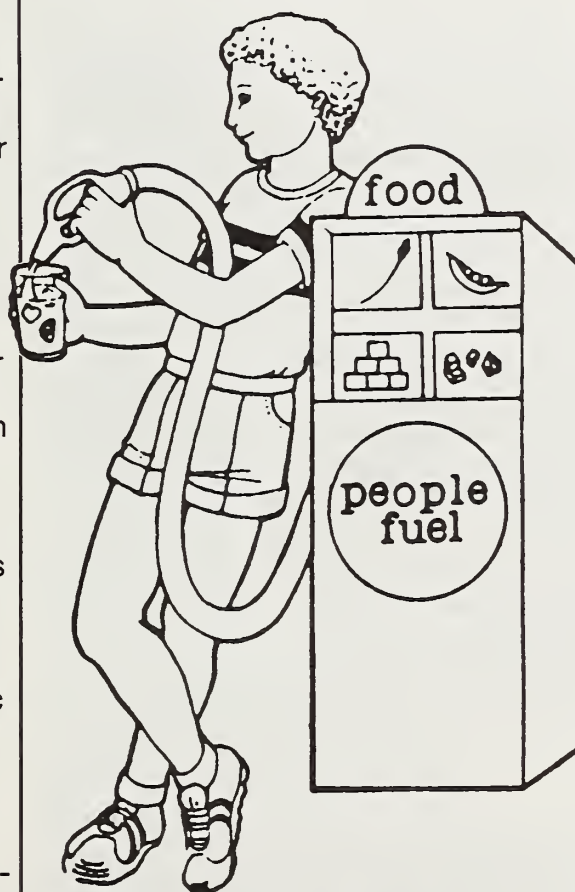
**Sports Nutrition Kit** (*Arizona*)

A kit for coaches, physical education teachers, and health professionals. The 136-page kit includes information on food, nutrition, and diet, and their impact on exercise, physical fitness, and sports performance. It comes with two posters.

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**Nutrition Education and Training Curriculum for the Profoundly, Severely, and Moderately Retarded** (*New Jersey*)

A curriculum for teaching mentally handicapped children about food and nutrition. Materials stress developing basic skills in several areas, such as food preparation, mealtime social skills, kitchen safety, and sanitation.



**Breadfruit Bread and Papaya Pie** (*Trust Territory of the Pacific Island*)

A book of recipes from Micronesia and the Outer Pacific. The introduction to this 340-page book describes cultural food practices—collecting, preparing, and serving food. Foods that are generally unfamiliar to mainland Americans are described and pictured in photographs and drawings. Recipes are grouped by type of food: fish and seafood, fruit, meat and eggs, vegetables, and cereals and grains. The book comes with 11 related posters.

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**Nutrition Bingo** (*Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands*)

A bingo game that uses foods instead of numbers. The game is played on 8½-inch by 11-inch cards that are beautifully illustrated with pictures of foods. Many of the foods are native to the Trust Territory. The game includes instructions.

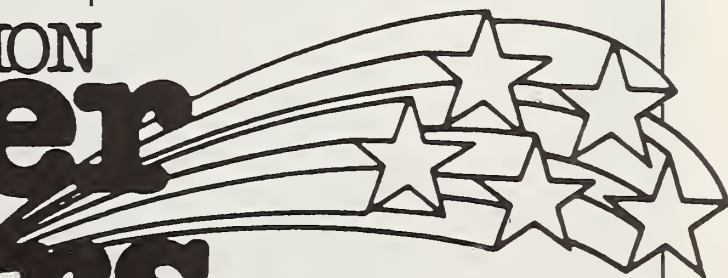
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**Sports Nutrition** (*Ohio*)

A kit that teaches the importance of nutrition in sports. It is directed at secondary school athletes. The kit includes a teacher's guide. Lessons are in four parts with each part using a section of the teacher's guide, a film strip, and a cassette. The four parts are: Part of the Winning Combination, Losing and Gaining Body Weight, Nutrition Concerns of the Female Athlete, and The Pre-game Meal.

The kit also contains four posters that explain various points on weight loss and gain, range of body fat, and iron content of foods. The kit includes a skinfold caliper.

NUTRITION  
**Super Stars**





### **Food Service Training Modules** (Arizona)

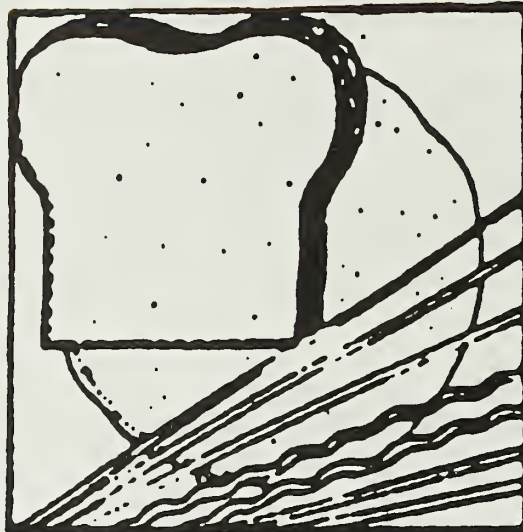
A set of curriculum modules for use in training school food service employees. Each module is packaged separately and contains ten 2-hour lessons. The lessons are ideal for the inexperienced teacher. The package includes: learning activities; prototypes for transparencies and handouts; and evaluation strategies cued to content outlines. The modules are arranged in five levels, each level building on the knowledge gained in the previous level. There is information on management as well as nutrition.

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### **Good Nutrition Commercials** (Arizona)

A series of lively audio announcements schools can play on their public address systems or use in individual classrooms. The announcements are designed to teach students the nutrition basics and encourage them to eat lunch at school.

There are two sets of announcements: one for elementary schools, and one for secondary schools. Each consists of a cassette tape, with sixty 1-minute announcements, and a program booklet.



### **Nutrition Education Training Manual for Family Day Care Providers** (New Jersey)

A resource for child care personnel working with day care providers. The manual contains lessons on: the functions and sources of nutrients; nutritional needs of infants; meal planning and food purchasing; and nutrition education for children. The manual is in a loose-leaf binder.

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### **Nutrition Activities** (Puerto Rico)

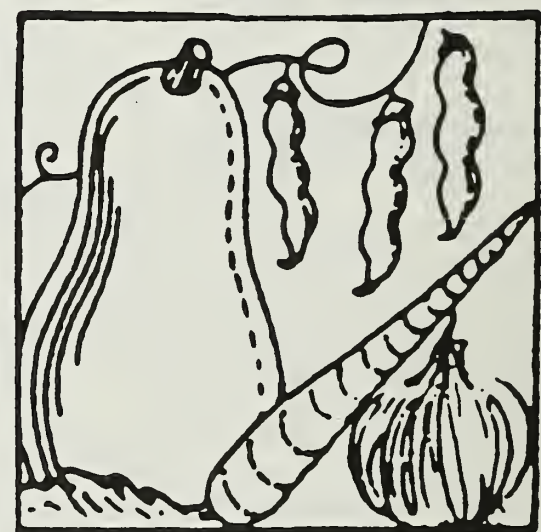
Nutrition activities for students, in both English and Spanish. There are about eight pages of puzzles and games that teach various simple nutrition concepts.

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### **Nutrition in Social Studies** (Wisconsin)

A set of materials that integrates nutrition education into kindergarten-through-sixth-grade social studies. Information is divided into eight disciplines that have potential or direct influences on food choices. Disciplines include anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, political science, geography, history, and nutrition.

Materials include a curriculum guide, handouts, quizzes, and additional information. The curriculum guide comes in a loose-leaf binder with lesson plans divided according to grade levels.



### **Nutrition and the Arts** (Arizona)

A set of nutrition training packages for child care directors and personnel. There are 12 packages in all, designed to teach nutrition principles through the fine arts—music, dance, and the visual arts. The packages include recipes, games, and ideas for art projects and other activities.

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To borrow materials or obtain more information on FNIC, write: Food and Nutrition Information Center  
National Agricultural Library  
Building, Room 304  
Beltsville, Maryland 20705  
or call: (301) 344-3719

article by Linda Feldman  
photos by Tino Serrano



# Teamwork makes a difference for South Carolina school districts

When a school district's food service department suddenly starts losing money and can't really explain why to the local school board, what can the district do? In South Carolina, the answer is just a telephone call away.

For the past 4 years, the office of school food services of the South Carolina department of education has responded to districts' requests for help by providing indepth technical reviews. The reviews are conducted by teams of local, state, and federal food service specialists.

## Teams look for patterns

A typical South Carolina technical assistance review begins with a school district's management staff filling out a self-evaluation form and submitting it to the state office of school food services. Information recorded on the form includes the goals of the district food service operation, the organizational structure, financial status data, and the scope of the child nutrition programs administered in the district. The information is studied by review team members before actual site visits are made.

A month after the self-evaluation, a 3-day on-site review takes place. A typical review team has 10 to 12 members with varying levels of experience in food production, financial management and program management. Local representatives on the team are food service directors from school districts that have something in common with the district being evaluated. For example, the districts may be the same size or have the same type of management structure.

Reviewers visit the majority of a district's schools, searching for districtwide patterns that affect the

food service operation. Three team members go to each school and observe. They talk to principals, students and food service personnel, asking a range of questions. Although each school visit is usually less than an hour, the three reviewers are still able to get a comprehensive picture of food service from the time food is purchased until it is served.

Team members do not use a standardized form to collect information. According to Marci Clark, chief supervisor of the office of school food service's auditing and special services section, the teams get better results with somewhat less structure. "Structure dictates what you're going to come up with," she says. "You don't have the flexibility of really looking at the total picture."

In addition to not using a review form, team members do not take notes about their observations while in a school.

"If reviewers feel they must take notes, we tell them to either go to the storeroom where no one will see or write their notes in the car after leaving the school," says Vivian Pilant, state director of school food services. The rationale for this approach is twofold, she explains. Note-taking inhibits responses or actions of school personnel; and when a reviewer is busy making notes, he or she may miss observing some aspects of the operation.

Despite the lack of a standardized form, the South Carolina reviews do have structure. Pilant assigns team members seven areas, such as management, facilities and equipment, and menus and food merchandising,



Schools in Oconee County have found they can save by using more USDA-donated foods, such as flour for baking. This was one recommendation from a technical assistance review completed 3 years ago.





By switching to centralized purchasing and making other management changes, Oconee County schools have cut costs substantially.



to observe. The self-evaluation form sent out prior to the review also provides a structured means of obtaining background data on the district's food service program.

After team members have visited their assigned schools and the district food service office, they meet to discuss their general impressions of strengths and weaknesses and to develop recommendations.

"It's probably one of the most involved groups of people you'll ever see," Vivian Pilant states. "The discussion is filled with 'Oh, we didn't find that. We found something else.' And, 'We found the same thing you found.' Soon the patterns begin to emerge."

The final report reflects the consensus of the team. Changes recommended in the report have no time limits and require no corrective action. School districts can freely choose which recommendations they will adopt and can establish their own system of priorities for change. Pilant personally presents

the report to the district's school board, explaining the previously unexplainable food service deficits or other review findings.

### Recommendations for Oconee County

Among the staunch advocates of technical assistance reviews are the food service management staff in Oconee County, South Carolina. When they asked for help 3 years ago, they were facing a \$50,000 deficit from the 1978-79 school year, and the school board was soliciting bids from food service management companies.

Today, district officials report a dramatic difference: by implementing only a few of the team's recommendations, the food service department has added \$184,000 to the operating funds balance in the last 3 years. Jim Bridges, Oconee County's business manager, views the fiscal recovery as a real achievement, considering that the district also had to cope with rising inflation during the same period.

According to Vivian Pilant, the food service management structure in Oconee County led to most of the

district's problems. All 22 schools were operating independently with principals and lunchroom managers making all purchasing and operating decisions. Although the school board had hired a food service director, they gave him no control over the individual schools; he served primarily as an advisor to local managers. After Pilant presented the report findings, however, the school board shifted food service management responsibilities to the district level.

"It's logical that management be provided centrally by staff who are trained in food service and all aspects of the school lunch program," says Jim Bridges. "We were trying to run the program before with persons trained in educational administration and with no training at all in food service." He adds that subsequent improvements would not have been possible without the change to centralized management.

He continues, "The first year we standardized menus as a preliminary step toward controlling food costs. We couldn't really make management decisions without some basis for comparison. Then the following



summer we employed an assistant food service director, wrote specifications, compiled a bid list and began bidding all food purchases, and wrote operating guidelines for schools."

### **Decreasing meal costs**

Oconee County's food service department is already realizing the results of centralized purchasing by bid. Food costs per meal were 47 cents in June 1982 as compared to 54 cents in December 1980. Costs of individual food items have gone down, and schools are using more USDA-donated foods.

The technical assistance review had revealed that managers were purchasing commercially prepared mixes for baked goods even though unlimited USDA-donated flour was available to them. Now the food service director and assistant director encourage managers to use commodities. They've eliminated purchases of convenience foods, except those that are labor-efficient.

While the Oconee County food service department has licked its deficit problem, staff members are not stopping there. They plan to continue implementing the reviewers' 74 recommendations gradually, improving areas such as cash control, the commodity delivery system,

and the processing of free and reduced-price meal applications.

Says Jim Bridges, "The technical assistance review was very helpful. It provided us with an alternative to contracting with a management company and it brought all our problems to light at once."

### **Reviews detect common problems**

Meanwhile, as more technical assistance reviews are conducted in South Carolina school districts, Vivian Pilant and her staff are detecting trends in the review findings that they haven't uncovered in their other compliance reviews and audits. For example, low productivity and poor scheduling have surfaced as problems in all of the technical assistance reviews. Poor communication with school boards is still another common problem.

"Food service directors have identified finance and accounting as one of their training needs," explains Pilant. "Many don't know how to budget and how to present their food service budgets to school boards in an understandable manner." As a result, this year the office of school food services has developed a training course for food service directors on recordkeeping and basic government and food service accounting. (See article on page 12.) A portion of the course deals with preparing budgets and making budget presentations to school boards.

### **Blue-print for future**

While technical assistance reviews are helping state staff to identify and address training needs, the review process is, at the same time, teaching district food service staff how to evaluate their own operations.

Compliance type reviews, conducted through the years, have primarily concentrated on whether regulatory requirements were met—not whether things could be done more economically or better. Technical assistance reviews, on the other hand, point out operational aspects that management staff should monitor. The review reports describe the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect, giving clear recommendations to a district for improvements. In short, the reports offer a blue-print for a district to follow in future years.

One review team member sums up the technical assistance approach this way: "The reviews work because they are positive. People want and appreciate help. Technical assistance reviews offer that help."

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*article by Brenda Schuler  
photos by Warren Uzzell*



The 22 schools in the district use standardized menus. Switching to standardized menus was the first step in controlling food costs.



# Training helps managers sharpen their financial and accounting skills

School food service directors have dual roles, as food production and service managers and as financial managers. Yet, the role of financial manager is one for which they often have no specialized training.

Realizing the local directors' need for training in financial management, some state staffs are now including in their training programs more sessions on topics such as tracking costs, identifying ways to cut costs, and maintaining accountability. In many instances, state agencies have contracted with local colleges and universities to provide this type of training.

For example, when food service directors in South Carolina identified finance and accounting as areas in which they needed training, Vivian Pilant, director of the state's office of school food services, looked for instructors in the field of finance. She found the special expertise she sought on the staff of Clemson University's Office of Professional Development and contracted with that office to have a training program designed specifically to meet the needs of South Carolina food service personnel.

## Training given in several parts

Three different training modules were developed. For school food service directors, there was a 6-day seminar designed for presentation in two 3-day segments. During the first segment, held in the fall of 1981, training covered problems and procedures unique to school food service. Procedures for internal controls, methods for receiving cash, accounting for sales, purchasing and inventory, and acquiring and depreciating equipment were some of the issues discussed.

The second segment, held in the spring, concentrated on needs identified after the first segment and on general accounting and internal control theories applicable to school food service.

The other two training modules were 1-day seminars. One, "Book-keeping for the School Food Service System," was designed to improve the skills of school food service district bookkeepers. The other seminar, for school district business managers, covered the school food service accounting system and its relation to the main school district accounting system. If they wished, school food service directors could attend both of these seminars in addition to their 6 days of other training.

Tom Friedlob, David Acker, and Lewis Bryan, assistant accounting professors at Clemson University and consultants with the University's Office of Professional Development, taught the courses. Friedlob and Bryan are certified public accounts; Acker is a certified internal auditor. All three professors have experience with governmental accounting systems, and Bryan has previous experience with institutional food service.

## Explained the why's of accounting

Using the state's forms and procedures, the instructors worked to help participants understand the underlying structure of what they were already doing. "School food service directors were performing accounting functions," says Bryan, "but they really didn't know why they were doing some things. When they left our course, they had a better understanding of the 'why' behind requirements."

One "why" the men stressed in all three training modules was the rationale for internal controls. Internal controls fix control of a particular asset, like food or cash, to a particular individual. For example, only one person should have access to a food storage area. If every employee has access to the storage area, then no one can be held responsible when the food supplies don't tally with the inventory records.

A common weakness in internal controls concerns cash handling. The person who has custody of cash

should not also keep the records of cash receipts. Although these two functions should always be separated, often they are not in small schools. In the seminars, the instructors emphasized that internal controls safeguard assets and ensure the accuracy of accounting information. This contributes to good management and operational efficiency.

## Formal planning is important

Another key concept was the importance of planned management action. "Everybody plans, whether it's a formal or informal process," says Bryan. "Nobody cooks a lunch without having an idea of what it costs." But, he continues, a formal planning process is preferable to a "seat of the pants" approach.

"If you plan for lunch to cost 86 cents," he says, "then the meal ideally should have an actual cost of 85.9 cents. Always try to lower the difference between planned and actual costs by good planning and accounting."

Acker agrees and adds, "If there are significant variances between planned and actual costs, then the reasons for those variances should be identified and pursued to prevent them from occurring again."

The three professors believe all school food service directors must know basic accounting terminology. While they were making their training plans, an auditor told them he had problems in achieving results because of difficulty in communicating his recommendations to food service personnel.

After the first finance and accounting training sessions for school food service directors, communication barriers began to disappear. Both auditors and the food service people were enthusiastically reporting improved communication with each other.

For other food service directors wanting to become more comfortable with their role as financial managers, accounting professors Tom Friedlob, David Acker, and Lewis Bryan offer the following tips:





# Tips for School Food Service Managers



## *On becoming an effective financial manager:*

**Learn the language of accounting.** The ability to communicate financial information is dependent on a good basic vocabulary.

**Use your accounting records and reports for evaluation.** Keeping records without using them is wasteful; they can provide managers with valuable information about the quality and quantity of operations.

**Plan ahead.** When you plan a menu, automatically estimate the number of servings and the ingredients needed. After serving the meal, look at what you actually used and how much it cost you, then compare these figures with what you planned. This will improve your planning ability and help you locate problem areas. Deviations from plans should be the primary focus of a manager's concerns.

**Make accounting records dynamic.** Managers should consult accounting records daily in order to spot trends, identify troublesome areas, and make needed changes. To make this possible, accounting records should be posted daily and on a timely basis. It is much more valuable to know that yesterday's meal cost 2 cents more than the price charged than to know the same about last Monday's meal. The sooner a problem is spotted, the sooner it can be corrected.

**Make financial plans as well as food and nutrition plans.** Know what your fund balance is and plan what it will be at month's end, at quarter's end, and at year's end. See how close you can come to your plan.

**Cost plans or budgets should be sensitive to level of activity.** Costs that vary with the number of meals sold should be separated from those

that do not. For example, overhead costs such as utilities, which vary little with the number of meals sold, should be separated from food costs.

## *On establishing internal controls:*

**Be sure you have proper internal controls.** Always assign a particular person to be in charge of assets like food or cash. Proper internal controls protect diligent employees when errors appear by pointing a finger at the person responsible.

**Separate the control of an asset from the accounting records.** For example, do not have the same person handling cash and keeping the records on it. This is an important cornerstone in internal accounting control.

## *On planned management action:*

**Make formal plans.** Everyone plans, whether it is informal—with only a notion of what one will do and the outcome one expects—or whether it is formal, scientific, and documented. The route to cost control lies in: first, making formal plans; second, comparing the actual costs incurred to the planned costs; and third, seeking to understand any difference between the two.

**When actual costs are less than the costs planned, that variance should be examined.** Managers should find out how the savings were achieved and why the planned or budgeted costs may not have been accurate to start with.

**Remember, food is an asset almost as desirable as cash to thieves.** It is small, easy to conceal, satisfies a universal need, and is impossible to identify once it has been consumed. Be as protective of your food assets as you are of cash.



# Glossary of Accounting Terms



The following are definitions of a few basic accounting terms. State departments of education and school districts may have modified these definitions to fit their own particular accounting systems.

**Accounting**—characterized as “the language of business.” It is the process of identifying, measuring and communicating financial information to permit informed judgments and decisions. Accounting is not only concerned with the recording of transactions, but also the preparation of reports based on the recorded data and the interpretation of the reports.

**Accounting period** (fiscal period)—a period at the end of which, and for which, financial statements are prepared.

**Accrual basis of accounting**—recording revenues in the accounting period in which they are earned and expenses in the accounting period in which they are incurred.

**Cash basis of accounting**—recording revenues and expenses in an accounting period only upon the receipt or payment of cash.

**Assets**—properties owned by a business or enterprise which have a monetary value. Food, equipment, cash and non-food supplies are examples of assets.

**Fixed assets**—assets of a long-term character which are intended to continue to be held or used, such as land, buildings, office furniture and food service equipment. (The term does not indicate the immobility of an asset, which is the distinctive character of a “fixture.”)

**Equities**—the rights of ownership to properties (assets).

**Owner's equity or capital**—the portion of an enterprise's assets owned by the enterprise itself rather than its creditors. It is the value left over after the value of liabilities (see definition below) is subtracted from the value of the enterprise's assets. Owner's equity is also known as net worth.

**Liabilities**—equities of creditors. These are debts of the business or enterprise. Liabilities are also called accounts payable. (For example, electricity used during the month of November, but not paid for until December, becomes a liability of the enterprise on November 30. At this time, a service has been received, but payment for the service has not been made.) Liabilities also include long-term debts, such as notes and bonds.

**Balance sheet**—a list of the assets, liabilities, and owner's equity of an enterprise as of a specific date, usually at the close of the last day of the month. Also known as statement of net worth.

**Depreciation**—(1) expiration in the service life of fixed assets attributable to wear and tear, deterioration, action of the physical elements, inadequacy and obsolescence; (2) the portion of the cost of a fixed asset which is charged as an expense during a particular period.

**Expenses**—charges incurred, for operation, maintenance, interest and other charges which are presumed to benefit the current accounting period.

**Direct expenses**—expenses incurred for the sole benefit of a department or unit.

**Indirect expenses**—expenses incurred for the joint benefit of more than one department or unit. The portion of indirect expenses attributable to each department or unit is determined through a process of allocation.

**Variable expense**—an expense which fluctuates with the level of activity. For example, the amount of food used in a food service operation varies directly with the number of meals served. Therefore, food is a variable expense. A food service manager has some control over these types of expenses.

**Fixed expense**—an expense which is constant, regardless of the level of activity. For example, depreciation on a piece of equipment is a fixed expense. A food service manager has little or no control over these types of expenses.

**Inventory**—a detailed list showing quantities, descriptions, and values of property. Inventories frequently also show units of measure and unit price.

**Revenue**—an increase of cash, accounts receivable, or other assets without a corresponding increase in liabilities. For example, cash received in exchange for goods or services is revenue; cash received by borrowing from a bank is not.

**Income statement**—a financial report presenting the financial results of an enterprise's operation during the accounting period to which it pertains. The statement presents all revenues realized by the enterprise, all expenses incurred to generate that revenue, and the difference between the two. In private business, this report is often called a profit-and-loss statement. In government accounting, it is known as a statement of revenues and expenditures.

*article by Brenda Schuler*



## A food service director from the corporate world talks about merchandising

When David P. Reynolds brings an important guest for lunch in his executive dining room, he expects instant smiling service and delicious food. As chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Reynolds Metals Company, a \$3 billion international producer of aluminum products, he gets it.

Other Reynolds employees get service too. Reynolds considers quality food service an integral part of the organization. Besides the executive dining room, there is an employee cafeteria in each of the company's two modern office buildings set in spacious, azalea-lined lawns in Richmond, Virginia.

Zani Cassis runs food service operations at Reynold's world headquarters. With a total staff of 36, she serves lunch to about 70 percent of the people at the complex—about 800 mostly executive workers. She also sends out coffee carts for mid-morning and afternoon refreshments.

And she is called on to provide special services, from breakfast meetings to aircraft box lunches, to dinner parties and evening receptions.

This article looks at the award-winning industrial food service operation at Reynolds and why it is successful. While Cassis' operation meets a number of company demands, many of her techniques can work just as effectively in school cafeterias. Good management is the key to sustaining employee morale, boosting sales, and increasing customer participation, both in the corporate world and in nonprofit school food service.

### Team spirit is important

The food service workers at Reynolds have a winning attitude. They like working together. They talk in a friendly way with people coming through the cafeteria lines. They move quietly from one work station to the next, going where they are needed, moving on when the work is completed. They know what they're doing, and a small number of people cover a lot of ground.

"Our employees train in at least three different positions, so we always have coverage during sick leave, vacation, and emergencies. It keeps the quality of service consistently good. So, if the cook is on

vacation—you've heard the expression—we don't get complaints about the soup," Cassis says.

"Our objective is for the employees to maintain the same quality performance in our absence as when we're here. We don't want our staff to be dependent on us for day-to-day work—just for long-term operations," she says.

Careful planning, along with tracking the work flow, allows staff to work during daytime slow periods on preparation for evening special events. No time is lost. To facilitate this, supervisors plan every special event to the last garnish and picture perfect table design. "Proper planning prevents poor performance" is the motto.

To get the staff to mesh this smoothly takes training. Every new employee gets 6 weeks of orientation including an introduction to Reynolds and the dining service, as well as on-the-job training. The staff gets regular in-service training as well. This year Cassis has shown films once a month from the Society of Food Management Library. The films are scheduled into a slow part of the afternoon so they do not disturb the regular work flow.

Cassis also uses buddy system training. "If we want to train someone to bake, we send him over and have



Zani Cassis (above) emphasizes team spirit and training in food service operations at Reynolds. Rotating jobs adds variety and helps workers develop new skills.





him work with the baker—we let the professional teach him,” she says.

### **Everyone gets chance to learn**

Cassis regularly rotates jobs between workers and transfers employees between the two cafeterias. Job rotation helps to spread around the less popular duties, and often gives employees the chance to learn something new.

“The employees like the stimulation of job variety,” Cassis says. “As in any operation, the employees like to grow. They like to learn something today that’s going to make their job more interesting. We look at our operation from the standpoint of personal growth and self-esteem of the employees.”

This philosophy is evident in the employees’ friendliness to customers coming through the lunch line, and their alert willingness to move on to the next duty station during a rushed lunch period. Reynolds’ supervisors reinforce the workers’ attitudes by providing direct encouragement.

“We give them the love they need,” Cassis says with a smile. “We provide guidance, pats on the back, and recognition. They need appreciation. You set the stage as a supervisor by the way you say good morning and everything else you do.”

The managerial philosophy is backed by a policy of informing employees of company expectations right away, and maintaining a formal appraisal system. Semi-annual appraisals on specific standards of performance, as well as career action plans, provide regular one-on-one communication with each employee. As part of the process, each worker does a self-evaluation.

“The evaluation makes the employees think about themselves, how they perform. Many times what the employee says matches what the supervisor has said, and that shows good communication between the two,” Cassis says.

Cassis works with problem employees to help them gradually overcome their fears. She uses job rotation, for example, to place employees who don’t like to be around people into positions with less public contact (for example, dish-washing instead of serving food). However she stresses that workers must know from the start what is expected of them.

“You have to tell your employees when they’re hired and whenever you can bring it up: ‘Our main purpose for being here is customer service. If it weren’t for the customer, you wouldn’t be here.’

“That’s what the friendly attitude is about,” she adds. “We want our customers to come back tomorrow.”

### **Two serving styles used**

A comfortable physical environment and high quality food are also essential to keeping the customers satisfied. The dining areas in both Reynolds cafeterias are restful, with attractive color schemes and large windows overlooking patios and gently sloping lawns. Rows of planters break up table groupings to provide variety in the seating area.

The bustling serving areas are separated from the dining areas by partial walls. One cafeteria has a linear type serving area, where the customer walks straight down the line and views all the food. The other has a scatter system, with mobile serving units which can be set in various designs. Customers go to a particular unit for the kind of food they want. With both styles of serving lines in her operation, Cassis has had a chance to compare.

“The scatter system is more modern, and facilitates serving more people, making better use of the space,” she says. “It also merchandises your food better, in more varied ways. It’s easier to use the color scheme of the serving area to complement your foods.

“The disadvantage of the scatter system is that it requires more staffing. It’s difficult for one staff person to cover two sections,” she says.

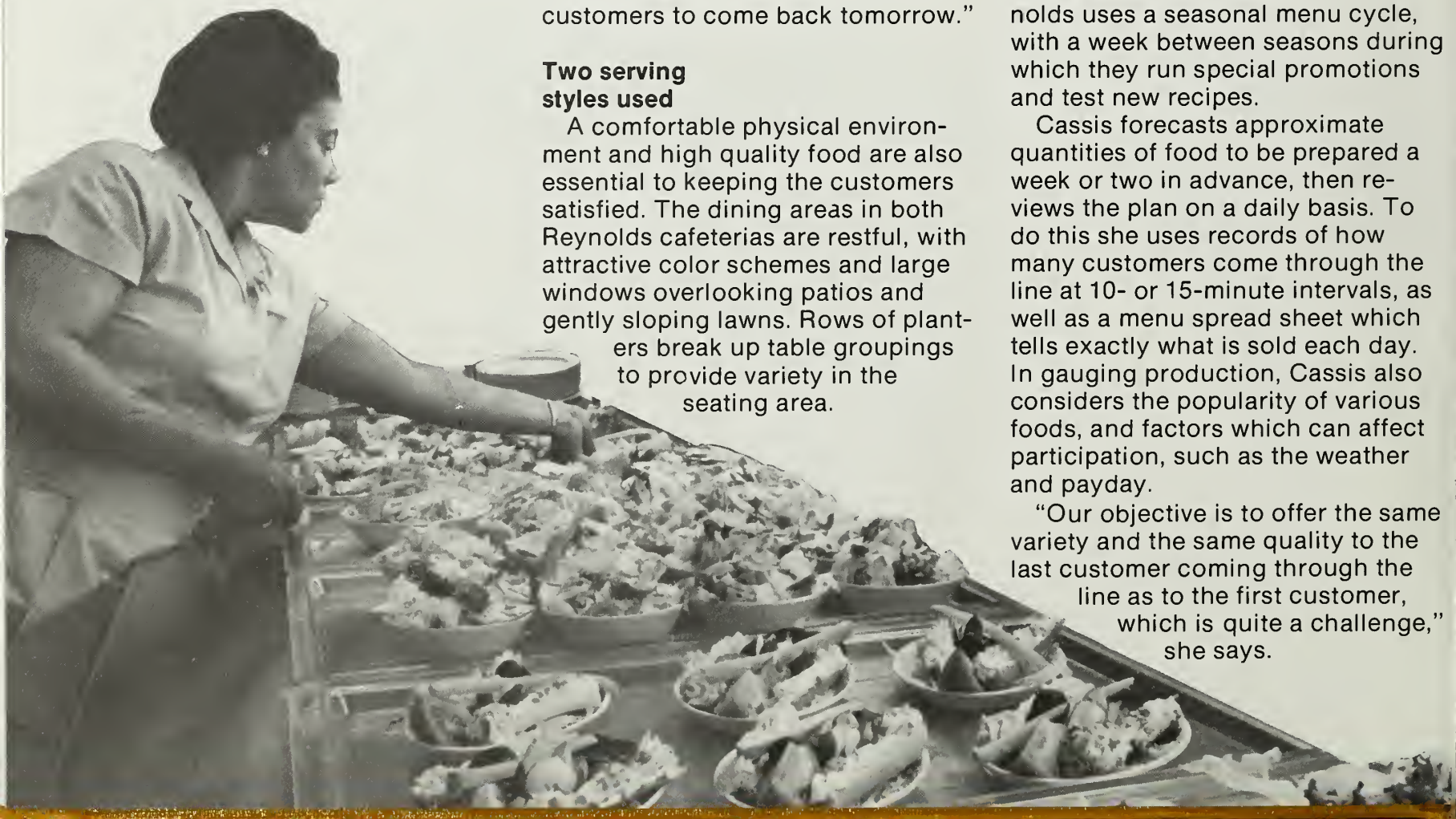
Cassis explains that while the line system is older and doesn’t display the food as well, it is easier to staff. During slow periods, one person can cover the whole line.

### **Merchandising wins customers**

In the overall operation, Cassis pays careful attention to customer preferences, menu planning, and timing of food preparation. Reynolds uses a seasonal menu cycle, with a week between seasons during which they run special promotions and test new recipes.

Cassis forecasts approximate quantities of food to be prepared a week or two in advance, then reviews the plan on a daily basis. To do this she uses records of how many customers come through the line at 10- or 15-minute intervals, as well as a menu spread sheet which tells exactly what is sold each day. In gauging production, Cassis also considers the popularity of various foods, and factors which can affect participation, such as the weather and payday.

“Our objective is to offer the same variety and the same quality to the last customer coming through the line as to the first customer, which is quite a challenge,” she says.





**Many of Cassis' techniques can work in school lunch-rooms, too. In this high school cafeteria, students have a variety of lunch choices. Attractive food displays and flower arrangements add color and interest to the serving line.**

Workers practice "relay" cooking to keep the food as fresh and attractive as possible throughout the serving period. Under this system, cooks do not fry items such as fish in batches, but cook almost to order, never letting the supply on the line run out. They judge how much to make from a combination of experience and studying the clientele's eating habits.

Cooks relay desserts as well. For example, they don't cut up a whole pie, but cut a few pieces at a time to put out on the line. The pie will keep better uncut, and if not used can be sold whole. "Slow movers," or foods that don't sell quickly on the serving line, are kept refrigerated.

Cooks at Reynolds also make salads only as they are needed. Workers can then store leftover ingredients raw, so a salad made from yesterday's ingredients still looks fresh and green.

To complement relay cooking, Reynolds uses pass-through Thermotainers to keep hot foods warm and attractive on the serving line. The cook places food into the heated storage compartment on one side, and the serving person takes it out as needed on the other side. Since the compartment is much warmer than the serving pans, it keeps the foods better.

Out on the line, servers know customers prefer a full pan to a half-full one. So when a pan is partially empty, they transfer the remaining food to a smaller pan to make it more appealing to customers.

#### **Color, lighting add interest**

Reynolds merchandises their food in other ways, too. Every part of the serving line shows imaginative and careful use of color and light. For





example, a dessert unit alternates yellow fruit gelatin and red cherry cheesecakes. When possible, areas with food are spotlighted. A variety of garnishes are used.

"Garnishing really isn't more expensive," Cassis says. "But we don't garnish everything with a cherry. We use small touches like parsley, radish flowers, apple wedges, olives, and carrot pieces. We merchandise lemonade with a lemon wedge."

To keep in touch with what customers like, Cassis does periodic market surveys by passing out questionnaires to the clientele. The salad bar currently operating in one cafeteria was requested by customers in a survey.

In response to customer concern for health and nutrition, Reynolds posts calories next to prices on the menu boards. Management runs a popular noontime health program that includes dietetic consulting for those referred.

Cassis also works to build participation through theme promotions. These help stimulate interest in the program with posters, banners, and occasional give-aways, done with the cooperation of travel agents, food suppliers, or special interest groups such as the Florida Citrus Commission.

Planning, merchandising, and working with employees in a team effort are all a part of what Cassis calls "management by objectives," a formula which keeps her operation running smoothly in a variety of functions.

"We do manage by objectives," she says. "We set objectives annually and we meet them. Our objectives this year have to do with budget, customer satisfaction, and customer participation."

### **Schools can use same ideas**

Cassis' objectives are similar to the goals of most school food directors. Many of her management methods would work well in school cafeterias. As a start, schools can involve their lunchroom workers in solving problems and identifying areas that need improvement.

According to Aaron Donatello, a trainer for the National Restaurant Association, school supervisors can try techniques such as job rotation

to give employees an appreciation for each other's jobs and to help them work together better.

Field trips to view food service operations in other schools or restaurants can make employees more aware of how their environment can be improved. Managers can use merchandising techniques to present their food more attractively, and relay cooking to keep the food fresh and appetizing.

They can use wall murals, student art, plants, and unusual lighting to make schoolrooms places where kids would want to be. Making cafeterias pleasant and inviting does not necessarily have to cost a lot of money, and it can boost staff morale as well as student interest.

Just as Reynolds cultivates an atmosphere of cooperation, school food managers can influence the attitudes of their employees by the example they set.

"Managers really can affect the climate of those who work for them by modeling various kinds of behavior—trust, for example," says William Crockett, an Arizona management consultant who has worked with food service companies and government offices, and has published more than 50 articles on management and motivation.

"A manager can show he trusts his subordinates by not looking over their shoulders, by caring enough to be honest about errors and expectations, and by giving support," he says.

Getting people to think about their behavior and how others react to it is important. But getting people to talk about their perceptions and feelings instead of mere surface issues is the key to real communication, according to Crockett.

"And that real communication—human talk—is especially important in food service because it affects those eating," he says. "It's important on the auto assembly line, but it's really important in food service."

Most of all, says Aaron Donatello, school food service directors need to look at the competition. "Do market research," he says. "Give out comment cards to the kids. Understand kids as customers, not as a captive audience."

*article by Jane Mattern  
photos by Larry Rana*

## **Students respond to a winning idea in Connecticut**

One school food service manager who's put marketing techniques to work is Eleanor Trainor, food service director of the D.A. Kramer Middle School in Willimantic, Connecticut.

Three years ago, Trainor took a hard look at the school's lunch program and decided to try some new ways to attract student customers. Together with Eunice Potter, district school lunch director, Trainor came up with a new bag lunch service that has boosted lunch sales at Kramer and brought the school state and national recognition for its innovative lunch program.

### **New service is convenient**

Each day the 800 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders have a choice of three different lunches. They can select one of two regular lunches, or they can have a bag lunch from a special quick serving line. The bag lunches include fresh fruits and vegetables as well as hot or cold sandwiches and milk.

In choosing the paper bag route, you might say Eleanor Trainor learned from the competition. "We were noticing that children were starting to brown bag it," she says. "I thought we could give them better meals in our own paper bags."

Trainor added the bag lunch at the end of the 1978-79 school year. To get students interested, she planned a special promotion, using a cartoon of the Kramer School mascot, a cougar, as a publicity theme. The Bag-a-Cougar lunch promotion was a success. Instead of the traditional June drop in the school's lunch participation, sales went up. This year, Kramer is selling about 100 bag lunches a day.

Before bag lunches were introduced, students had to spend a good portion of their 20-minute lunch period waiting on line. Trainor feels this discouraged many potential customers. "The lines were so long sometimes there wasn't adequate time to eat," she says. With the addition of the faster line, the



waits became shorter for everyone, making lunchtime more relaxed.

### **Requires no extra space**

An advantage to the bag lunch is that it doesn't require any added equipment or space. The lunches are prepared and put together in the morning, then served from an otherwise hard-to-use space near the other serving lines.

The school did have to hire two more workers to prepare the bag lunches, but the increased participation, plus a la carte sales of mostly yogurt and fruit juices, has brought in enough income to cover the extra wages.

Full-price lunches, whether served on trays or bag-style, are 95 cents. Reduced-price lunches are 40 cents. On some days, Bag-a-Cougar lunches include special treats, like toasted grinders or tacos, instead of sandwiches. Raw vegetables such as broccoli, radishes, turnips, and peppers often come with a small cup of chilled vegetable dip.

Trainor has used the bag lunches to creatively package nutrition education as well as school lunches. For a Nutrition Awareness Week at the school, she arranged with the University of Connecticut to get a computer print-out listing nutrition information on featured foods. Each day during the week, students got small copies of the print-out in their lunch bags. Many shared the information with their parents, who praised Trainor for the effort.

### **Award for excellence**

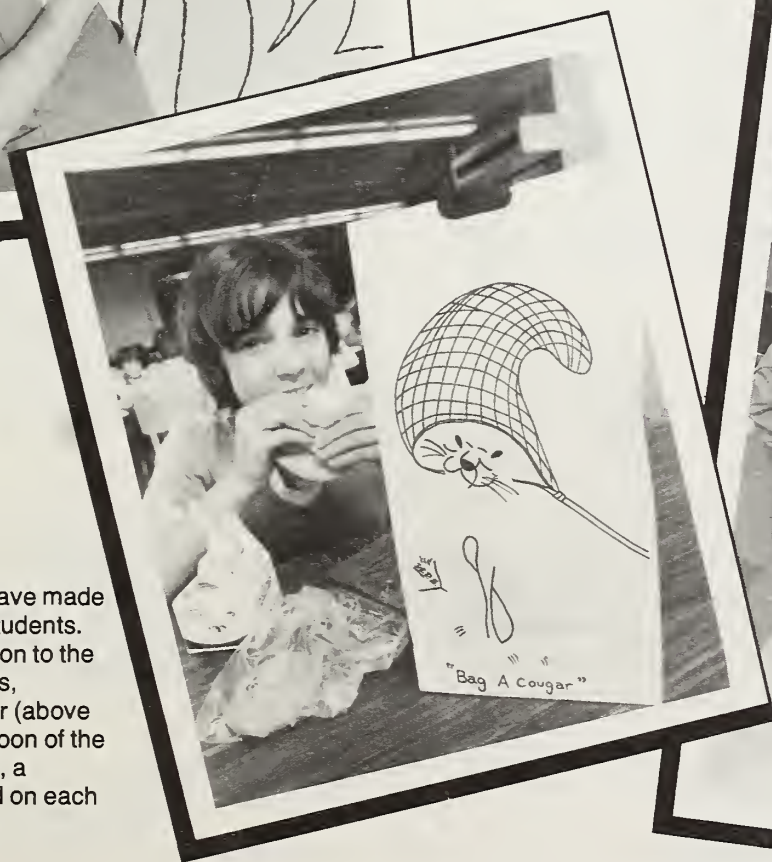
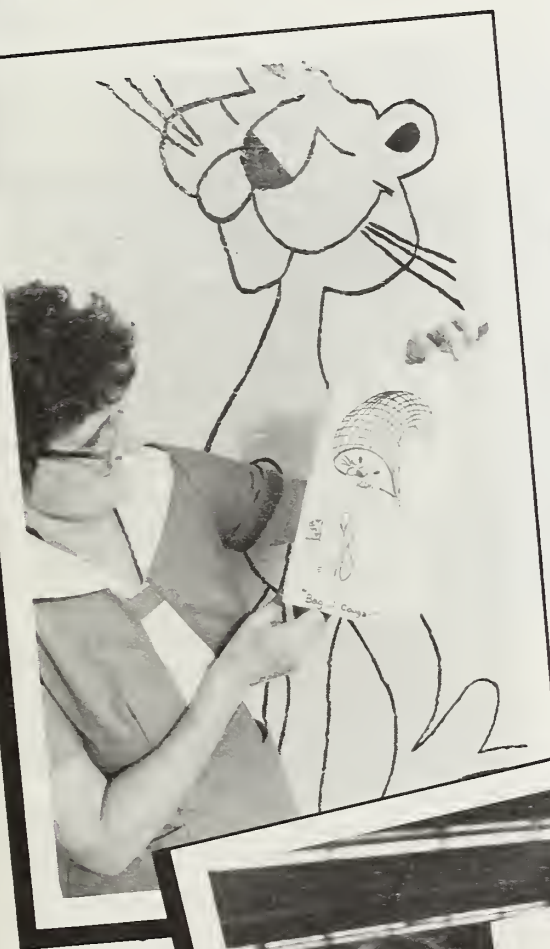
Such imaginative work has also brought Eleanor Trainor praise from her fellow food service professionals. Last year she secured nominations at several competitive levels for the American School Food Service Association's Louise Sublette Award of Excellence. This annual award is made to a manager or

employee of a single unit school food service operation. Having won the Connecticut and northeast area nominations, Trainor received the national award at the ASFSA July 1982 convention in Denver.

For more information on the Kramer school lunch program, write:

Eleanor Trainor  
D.A. Kramer Middle School  
Willimantic, Connecticut 06226

*article by Chris Morton  
photos by George Robinson*



Bag lunches have made a big hit with students. To draw attention to the special lunches, Eleanor Trainor (above left) has a cartoon of the school mascot, a cougar, printed on each bag.



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# Food & Nutrition

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